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ABSTRACT

Presented are results of interviews conducted with 43 elementary teachers from nine schools having participated in the Upper Midwest Small Schools Project (UMSSP), a program of teacher workshops and diagnostic clinics on exceptionality in the regular classroom. A summary of teachers' responses regarding UMSSP and special students is presented along with statements supporting, neutral to, or not supporting the concept of integration. Discussed are three major recommendations concerning more course work relating to exceptional children, more direct contact and experience with the various systems for delivering educational services to exceptional children, and more contact with exceptional children. Appendixes include a copy of the interview questionnaire, letters sent to administrators of UMSSP schools, teacher statements regarding mainstreaming, teacher responses about problems with mildly retarded students in the regular class, and teachers' recommendations for teacher education. (SB)

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EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS IN REGULAR CLASSES: INTERVIEWS WITH 43 NORTH DAKOTA ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

January, 1976

Minot State College
Division of Education
And Psychology

Dr. Clark Markell

EC 081 365

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INTRODUCTION

Recently I was cornered by a friend and working mother with three children who wanted to know, "Is your project concerned with learning disabilities?" "Yes," I said while adding quickly that mainstreaming is still being defined and debated. "Well I was just reading in one of my women's magazines that parents have the right to know about and should demand to see test results when students are labeled as "special" in some way. She then described the authors' discussion of a boy who now holds a Ph.D. and how this student might be detrimentally labeled as having a learning disability if placed in some of today's schools. My friend further asserted that she felt some of the "old time" teachers seemed able to handle all children without these "extra teachers."

What about this article in a "women's magazine?" Apparently the debate about mainstreaming or integration is really on. Discussion is no longer confined to law reviews and academic journals. Now the NEA, teachers unions and parents with three children are asking questions. Grants have been awarded and research intensified. A full day session at the upcoming Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) Convention has been set aside to discuss mainstreaming and Education Divisions such as those at Minot State are in the process of revising education courses so regular teachers are better prepared to meet the needs of exceptional children in regular classes.

In the following report the feelings and opinions of forty-three North Dakota elementary teachers from nine different schools are reported and analyzed. The purpose of this study was to give teachers a chance

to talk about exceptional children in their classes. Changes in undergraduate courses at Minot State will then be based upon teacher experiences and perceptions. Philosophically, the study closely parallels the ideas expressed by Roger Reger in an article titled "What Does Mainstreaming Mean?" published in the October, 1974 issue of the Journal of Learning Disabilities. Reger suggested that "needs for teacher in-service training should evolve out of the perceptions and experiences of the teachers themselves, not be passed out from 'experts'."

A precise definition of the term "mainstreaming" was not established in this study even though an instrument to assess teacher and student feelings about various special education delivery systems is being developed as part of the Minot State HEW funded project. Presently, mainstreaming means different things to different people. To some, the concept is similar to integration where children who were housed in isolated facilities are moved into regular school buildings and placed in special, self-contained classes alongside classes for non-handicapped children. Other people believe the concept means the total elimination of any semblence of specialized grouping on the basis of type of disabilities. Between the two extremes are varying efforts to assign handicapped children into the same programs as non-handicapped students, but with special assistance provided by resource room teachers, diagnostic teams, teacher aids, consultant personnel, after school tutors, or in some cases, older children.(Reger, 1974).

Undoubtedly the full range of definitions for mainstreaming currently exists among North Dakota educators and the teachers interviewed in this study. In addition, more than one system for delivering services to exceptional children exists within the state and is being coordinated by

the State Department of Public Instruction. There is also concern about changing the present special education delivery system to a more integrated or mainstreamed model, and that there be corresponding changes in the regular education programs at North Dakota teacher training institutions. In an effort to gain information about the needs of recent graduates, Espeseth and Armstrong, (1975) sampled recent graduates of North Dakota teacher training institutions. Participants in the Espeseth and Armstrong study were asked to rate themselves with respect to a list of competencies developed by these investigators.

A comparison between the results obtained by Espeseth and Armstrong (1975) and this study is considered in the discussion section of this paper. It should be stressed, however, that although the term "competencies" is very popular among some educators today, the term implies a certain philosophical orientation toward instruction that may not be universally accepted. Also, the term is relatively new in educational jargon and few of the teachers interviewed in this study used it, even though it was included in item 17 on the question guide.

All data was collected during a four week period during late November and early December, 1975. The report was written during late December, 1975 and early January, 1976.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to interview elementary teachers in schools that took part in the Upper Midwest Small Schools Project (UMSSP) from 1972-1974 in order to:

1) identify which competencies they felt were important when teaching an exceptional student in their regular classroom

2) obtain recommendations about changes colleges such as Minot State should make in their undergraduate program to better prepare teachers to be more effective in a mainstreaming environment

3) gather information about the educational delivery system that presently exists in small central North Dakota schools, particularly with respect to the exceptional child.

Population and Sample

The sample of teachers in this study was selected from the population of elementary teachers at schools that participated in the Upper Midwest Small Schools Project (UMSSP) from 1972-1974. This population was chosen because the UMSSP program focused on several aspects of exceptionality during workshops and diagnostic clinics which were held for teachers. It was hoped that teachers in these schools would have given more thought to the topic of exceptionality in the regular classroom. In addition to attending workshops and diagnostic clinics, these teachers had participated in the UMSSP project by identifying students from their classes who had various problems. Teachers then observed while the identified students were evaluated by a diagnostic team of specialists in medicine, education and psychology.

A map showing the location of the nine selected UMSSP schools is shown in Figure I. These schools were selected to geographically represent the area covered by the UMSSP.

Basic information about the 9 schools and the number of teachers interviewed is presented in Table I. This information was published in the 1975-1976 North Dakota Education Directory.

FIGURE I. Location of Schools

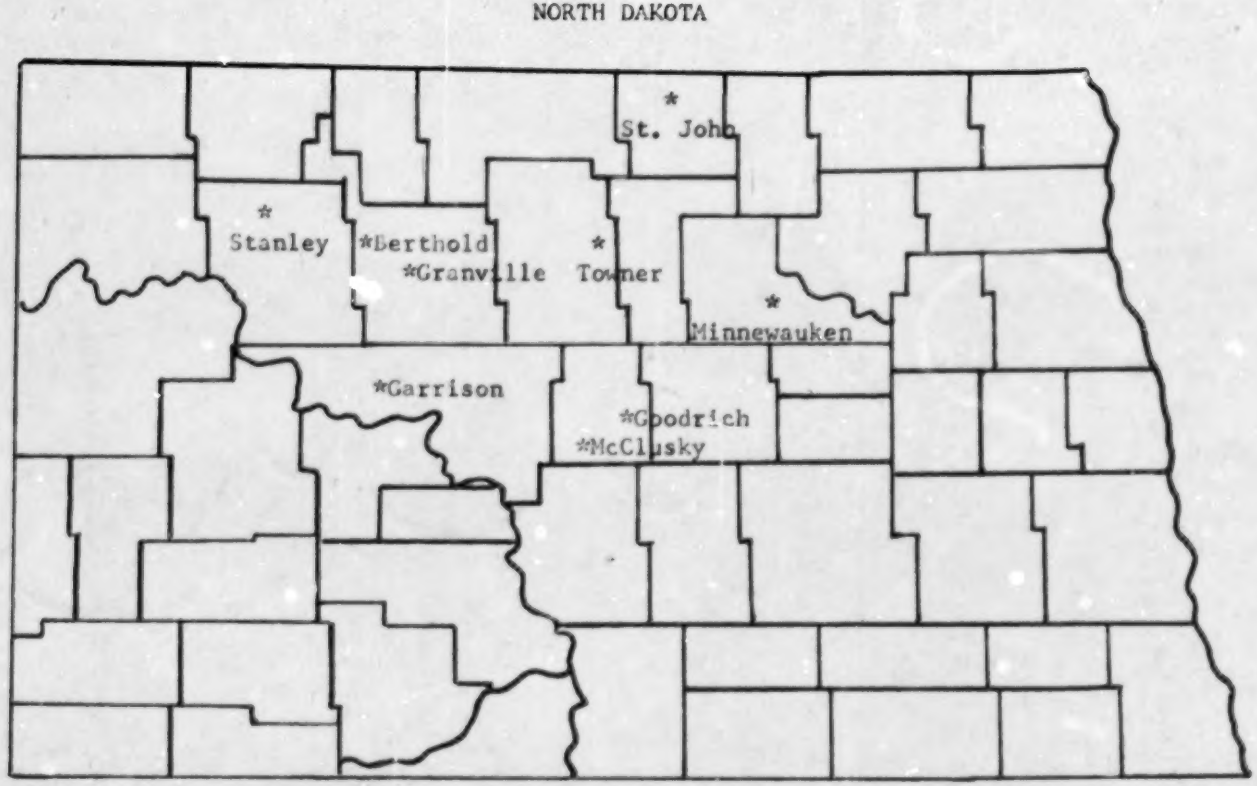

TABLE I

BASIC DATA ABOUT PARTICIPATING UMSSP SCHOOLS

Participating School	Total Students k-12*	Total Students k-8	Teachers k-8	Teachers interviewed**
Berthold	290	182	8.00	1
Garrison	668	376	19.50	9
Goodrich	184	60	8.50	2
Granville	234	154	10.00	5
McClusky	395	240	9.00	4
Minnewauken	208	129	9.50	5
St. John	522	215	11.00	7
Stanley	673	423	23.00	5
Towner	458	269	16.00	6
TOTAL				43

*This data was taken from the 1975-1976 edition of the North Dakota Educational Directory.

**This figure may include special or "Title" teachers.

The sample of forty-three teachers interviewed in the study had taught an average of 12.63 years. This distribution is shown in Table II.

TABLE II

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Years Taught	Number of Teachers Interviewed
0 - 5	16
6 - 10	7
11 - 15	8
16 - 20	5
21 - 25	1
26 - 30	4
31 - 35	1
36 - 40	2
TOTAL	43

Mean number of years teaching experience = 12.63 years.

Thirty-seven of the forty-three teachers in the study taught a regular class between kindergarten and seventh grade. Six of the teachers were employed as specialists in remedial reading, basic skills, or learning disabilities. The distribution of interviewed teachers by grade level is represented in Table III.

TABLE III

DISTRIBUTION OF TEACHERS BY GRADE LEVEL

Grade Level	Number of Teachers Interviewed
Kindergarten	1
1st	6
2nd	5
3rd	8
4th	7
5th	5
6th	3
7th	2
Basic Skills, Remedial Reading, or L.D.	6
TOTAL	43

METHODS

Superintendents at 11 of the 25 schools participating in the UMSSP were contacted by letter (see Appendix B). The letter briefly explained the objectives of the Minot State Program and asked for permission to interview elementary teachers. Each letter was followed by a phone call during which the objectives of the Minot project were discussed in greater detail be Dr. Markell. In most cases an appointment was then set up for the interview. Interviews were not conducted at one of the contacted schools because the superintendent expressed the view that his teachers were too busy. Another could not participate because a busy school schedule necessitated conducting the interviews at a time too late to be included in the study.

All interviews were conducted by Dr. Clark Markell, assistant director of the Minot State project. An interview guide containing eighteen questions (see Appendix A) was used. In each case the teachers were given a copy of the questions to examine either before or during the interview. In almost all cases interviews were conducted in a quiet office made available by the administration away from other teachers and students. In several schools the superintendent or principal designated someone to "cover" each teachers class during the 12-20 minutes the interview lasted.

All teacher responses to questions were recorded in long hand by the interviewer so the interviewee would be free to respond to the questions. The interviewer usually sat near the interviewee and each teacher was encouraged by the interviewer to "correct me if I write down anything incorrectly." In most cases the written statements were

read back to the teacher at the conclusion of a question to insure accuracy. Some statements were taken down verbatim while others were paraphrased. If there was any paraphrasing, the interviewee was asked, "Is this what you mean?" The interviewer made every effort to remain neutral about issues but frequently asked teachers to clarify their statements or to provide more specifics. Teachers were encouraged to "feel free to ignore any questions that you would prefer not to answer."

All long hand interview notes were typed within a day or two after the interviews. When possible teacher responses have been tabulated and presented in summary form in the results section of this report. Complete teacher responses are located in the Appendices.

RESULTS

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 3 THROUGH 10 CONCERNING THE UPPER MIDWEST SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT AND SPECIAL STUDENTS.

When asked about their schools' involvement in the UMSSP project, ninety-eight percent of the teachers interviewed believed their school was involved in the UMSSP while 2% gave no response to this question. In response to question number four about the individual teachers involvement in the program, approximately 53% of the teachers interviewed took part in some phase of the project, while 37% indicated they did not. The remaining 10% were either undecided or gave no response.

In the interview guide items five and six, teachers were asked about the workshops and diagnostic sessions which were held in connection with the UMSSP. Sixteen of the teachers interviewed indicated they attended one or more workshops. If students were sent to the diagnostic clinic phase of the program, they were generally selected by the regular teachers along with recommendations from the remedial reading teacher or other specialists.

When teachers were asked if any students were placed in different learning situations (classes) as a result of the diagnostic sessions (Item number 7), 55% of the 18 teachers involved with the diagnostic clinics responded positively while 45% of the respondents said their students remained in their previous learning situation.

In item 8 on the guide teachers were asked where students with special handicaps or learning problems are now placed in their school district. Obviously, "special handicap or learning problem" is not defined in this item and there frequently was discussion about definitions.

When asked, the interviewer responded that the question referred to students that are normally classified as special education students. Although a percentage tally would be misleading for this item, the following observations were made:

1) Even in small school systems teachers are often unaware that one or more students are being sent to a special education class in a neighboring town.

2) The exact relationship between the regular teacher, special education teacher, learning disabilities teacher (if available), and remedial reading or basic skills teacher ("Title people") varies from school to school. There are also considerable differences among schools concerning decisions about who will work with which students.

3) In most, but not all cases, the remedial reading, basic skills, learning disabilities. or Title teachers work with students in an area physically removed from the regular classroom. This means that students must leave the room for help and miss regular class activities.

4) In several schools, teachers "suspected" that students in their classroom or school "would qualify for a special education class." In one case the interviewer was asked about how to acquire the proper tests to make the appropriate assessment.

Thirty-four of the teachers interviewed responded to the question concerning how the decision concerning the placement of special education students is made (Item number 9), of this number 45% indicated the decision was made jointly by the teacher, administrator and testing, 33% felt the teacher was the primary decision maker, 19% responded that it was a joint teacher administrator decision while 3% saw the decision as one made by the superintendent.

In question 10, teachers were asked if they had ever known or had a student who was placed in a special learning situation. If they responded positively, they were asked to describe the problem. A summary of part B of this item is presented in Table IV.

TABLE IV

RESPONSES TO ITEM 10, PART B

Nature of Problem	Number of Teachers Identifying this type of Exceptionality
Reading Problems	6
Learning Disabilities	6
Slow Learner	4
Mentally Retarded	2
Speech Problem	2
Basic Skills	2
Emotional Problem	1
Epileptic	1
Cleft Palate	1
Deaf	1

Seventy-four percent of the teachers interviewed indicated they were familiar with the term mainstreaming or integration of mildly handicapped students (Item number 11). Seven percent said they were not familiar with the concept and 19% gave no response or were undecided about the question.

Teacher responses to the question number 11, "How do you feel about it?" [Mainstreaming] are presented in sections A, B, and C which follow.

Section A

Statements Generally Supporting the Concept of Integration

"This program is essential to handicapped students because it helps them prepare for their outside world."

"This is where they should be. Everyone will be together in society. There are enough handicaps without social segregation."

"Emotionally - yes, Physically - yes, Mentally - yes."

"I strongly support the concept of integrating special students into regular classes."

"I feel it is best for the child emotionally, socially, and mentally."

"I agree if they are not too severe."

"I feel it is a very good idea if the school is ready for it and there is a good student/teacher ratio."

"Our district mainstreams now. I feel the student should be in the regular class as much as possible. Special students are tested too much."

"The classroom seems to adjust if slow students dress properly and are clean. It does work in the first grade."

"We do some mainstreaming here now. They are able to make more progress. I feel they should remain in their home environment rather than being shipped off."

"It is good if they still get support from special teachers. It is bad if they are going out (of the class) for everything."

Section B

Neutral Statements About Integration

"Students with learning disabilities - yes; Special education students - no."

"Students with learning disabilities - yes; Special education students - no."

"We do that now."

"We do this for L.D. students."

"We do this now!"

"It is very difficult to make a general statement. It mild enough so it does not have a negative effect on the classroom."

"We do that here."

"It is fine if the teacher has had some special training. It has to be selective. Not applicable for all subjects."

"We do that here now."

"There are three integrated students in the fifth grade."

"I am familiar with this."

"We do it now."

"We do it."

"One student I had last year left the room for math and reading."

"Last year I had two that were in my room part of the time. They were borderline."

"We do some of this now. We have problems finding enough time to work with students. Sometimes they have to repeat a grade."

"To some extent this describes our program now because we do not have an L.D. teacher."

"They miss classroom instruction when they are out."

Section C

Statements Generally Not Supporting the Concept of Integration

"It is a good idea but I am not certain it will work. When we get down to the practical situation, I do not have enough time. I have thirty students."

"Sometimes it helps. Most depends on the students. Two of the students need a special class."

"If they had a bigger school. It is a strain on the students when they have to keep up with the regular students in the regular class."

"If I had a smaller group it might work. I don't have the time to give them the individual attention. I have 26 students."

"We do it here now. We have no choice. It would work fine if we could have full time aid to give special help."

"Students don't get the attention needed."

"I am not in favor of it. I feel the regular teacher is generally unaware of the problems of the regular student."

Eleven of the 36 statements made by teachers in Section A, B, and C were generally positive about the concept of mainstreaming, 18 were generally neutral and 7 held negative views. Seventy percent of the 43 teachers felt integration or mainstreaming had been tried at their school although it was frequently evident that teachers were considering many types of exceptionality and did not refer only to children normally placed in special education classes.

Seventy-two percent of the 43 teachers felt mainstreaming or integration worked at their school, 2 % felt it did not and 20% gave no response to this item. A complete list of all teacher comments to this item may be found in Appendix D.

Questions 14 and 15 provided information about the type of special students the teachers interviewed in this study had encountered. Sixty-five percent felt they had had a student at some point that was mildly retarded in their classes, 26% felt they had not and 9% gave no response or were undecided. When asked if they had had a student in their class with a physical disability such as sight loss, hearing loss, or loss of limbs, 58% said they had, 35% said they had not and 7% gave no response.

In item 16, teachers were asked to list specific problems they encountered when they had a student in their class who was mildly retarded. A complete list of responses given by the 31 teachers that

responded to this question is included in Appendix E. A summary of this information is provided in Table V.

TABLE V

SUMMARY OF TEACHER RESPONSES WHEN ASKED "WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED WITH A MILDLY RETARDED STUDENT IN YOUR REGULAR CLASS?"

Generalized Response	Number of Times Mentioned
"Learning difficulties, slow learner couldn't read, poor in math."	15
"Discipline or behavior problems."	12
"Difficulty locating appropriate materials or individualizing."	8
"No problems fitting into the regular class socially."	5
"Took too much time for individualization, special assignments needed."	4
"Sight, hearing, or speech problem."	4
"Had trouble fitting into regular classroom situation socially."	3
"Older, more mature physically."	2
"Student not interested."	1
"Special students tested too much."	1
"A wide variety."	1

Teacher recommendations to undergraduate institutions such as Minot State (Interview guide questions 17 and 18) are summarized in Table VI. In addition, the complete statements of five teachers who seemed to have had a positive experience with exceptional children in a regular classroom have been selected and appear on page 21. Statements from all other teachers are located in Appendix F and G. Recommendations from teachers with less than 5 years experience are located in Appendix F, while those with more than 5 years of experience may be found in Appendix G.

TABLE VI

TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS TO COLLEGES

Generalized Recommendations	Teachers with 5 years teaching experience or less		Teachers with more than 5 years teaching experience		All Teachers	
	Times Mentioned	Percent	Times Mentioned	Percent	Times Mentioned	Percent*
More practical experience, student teaching, and/or work with special students in a classroom setting	8	19.5%	17	33%	25	26.8%
More course work concerning exceptional children	8	19.5%	11	22%	19	20.4%
More about Individualization	5	12.2%	4	7.8%	9	9.7%
More reading	3	7.3%	5	9.8%	8	8.6%
More on discipline	3	7.3%	2	3.9%	5	5.4%
More on how to sequence activities	3	7.3%	1	2%	4	4.3%
More psychology and learning theory	3	7.3%	1	2%	4	4.3%
Patience, sympathy, and the ability to get down to the students' level	0	0%	4	7.8%	4	4.3%

TABLE VI

TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS TO COLLEGES

Generalized Recommendations	Teachers with 5 years teaching experience or less		Teachers with more than 5 years teaching experience		All Teachers	
	Times Mentioned	Percent	Times Mentioned	Percent	Times Mentioned	Percent*
More work with gifted students	2	4.8%	2	3.9%	4	4.3%
More on how to use A.V. materials to teach the handicapped	0	0%	2	3.9%	2	3.2%
More on how to design bulletin boards	2	4.8%	0	0%	2	3.2%
More on how regular and special teachers should work together	0	0%	1	2%	1	1.1%
More self awareness training	0	0%	1	2%	1	1.1%
More on how to use films to help pick out students with learning difficulties	1	2.4%	0	0%	1	1.1%
A culture orientation course	1	2.4%	0	0%	1	1.1%
More on malnutrition and childhood diseases	1	2.4%	0	0%	1	1.1%
More on behavior modification	1	2.4%	0	0%	1	1.1%
TOTAL Suggestions	41		51		93	

*Percentages were computed by comparing the total number of times a given suggestion was made with the total number of suggestions made by that group. Several teachers made more than one suggestion.

Recommendations From Experienced Teachers Who Seemed To Have Had Positive Experiences with Exceptional Children in the Regular Classroom

Teacher #1

"Patience and the ability to come down to the students' level are important. When I have had special students in my regular classes, I design similar materials for these students that are not as difficult as what I give the others. I try to treat them as normal and do not show irritation."

"I ordered special materials for such things as phonetics, reading, math and special books. Many subjects need to be read orally, these students listen carefully. I kept booklets on desks. I would work with them at my desk just as I did with others in the class. I made certain they were regular participants in classroom activities."

Teacher #2

"The teacher must have a feeling of concern for children. A sympathetic feeling is very important and the teacher should learn to work a special child in socially with others."

"I feel a counselor might be needed in the elementary grades. In one case in my class, my principal acted as the counselor. This worked fine."

Teacher #3

"1 to 1 contact with a student with a cleft palate helped me. There should be more actual experience with students with special problems. Less theory from books."

"I took a course at MSC in speech. As part of this course I tutored a special student. This was most helpful to me. The student's Daddy sat right there during the sessions."

Teacher #4

"Course work should not just include diagnostic testing but also how to handle situations. I tracked down materials that I am able to use. There are not enough materials for remedial reading."

"I got this student to work with the other students. It was good. The whole class became involved in the project."

Teacher #5

"I favor bringing mildly handicapped into the regular classroom, although basics may have to be taught in a special room. If possible,

fewer tests should be given. The state might pick one test they feel is good. Special education teachers should fit into regular systems by remaining in the room and teaching in an open system."

"There should be pre-service experience work with special students, also more practical experiences in work related jobs. (i.e. telephones, etc.) A degree in special education at a certified school would be helpful. Patience and a feeling of love are also important."

RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Recommendation I

Pre-service teachers should take more course work concerning exceptional children.

The teachers interviewed in this study felt a strong need for more course work concerning exceptional children. They frequently find teaching reading and mathematics a problem and are concerned with how to handle the exceptional child in the regular classroom. They look favorably on more course work in areas such as "learning disabilities" and "special education", although they did not specify whether such work should be taught in special or regular education courses. These recommendations were made so frequently, in fact, (see Table VI and Appendix F and G) that some philosophical and practical issues need to be raised.

Why, for example, do teachers so frequently suggest more special courses. Is this recommendation made primarily on knowledge of the advances that have been made about how to teach exceptional children? Or are teachers making this suggestion simply because special education is relatively new and unknown? Little light is shed on these questions by the data collected in this study since only two of the 38 regular teachers interviewed indicated they had actually taken special education courses. One found the courses interesting "but not particularly helpful in the regular classroom situation." The other found a speech course where she worked with a student on a one to one basis "with his Daddy sitting right there" extremely valuable. More research is obviously

needed to answer these questions and to precisely determine which content and experiences are most important.

Recommendation II

Pre-service teachers need more direct contact and experience with the various systems for delivering educational services to exceptional students.

While familarity with the term "mainstreaming" or "integration" is at best incidental, there seems to be a strong need for both regular and special teachers to realize that there are several ways to deliver services to mildly handicapped children and that these systems have various advantages and disadvantages. Many times it was difficult to determine whether or not a given teacher's apparent negative attitude toward a certain exceptional child was based primarily on feelings about exceptionality or grew more from a philosophical opposition to the present somewhat segregated system for delivering educational services. Several regular teachers seemed to resent having students leave the room for special help. In such cases one can see the exceptional child not only being labeled as "special" but also being resented by his teacher and held responsible for "the work missed." One teacher described with pride how she got the better students to help those with problems and the sense of joy everyone in the class felt when progress was made. This teacher also described how she made up special math worksheets for one exceptional student and was careful to include his work in with the papers for other students so "he wouldn't feel special." It was evident from her comments that there was a good social climate for all students in this classroom. In other interviews,

however, it was as strongly evident that a teacher resented a particularly gifted student or was "letting slow students sit there." Many teachers cited the additional work connected with individualizing and the age old press of time as factors which affected their feelings about the system and certain students. It is recommended that time be spent during both regular courses and practicum experiences to give students an opportunity to test and examine their attitudes about various systems for delivering services to exceptional children.

Recommendation III

Present practicum experiences should be examined to determine the frequency with which pre-service teachers encounter exceptional children and the nature of that coutact.

Teachers frequently recommend more contact with exceptional children. This suggests that present practicum experiences need to be carefully examined, if not expanded. Student teachers, for example, might be asked to identify students that are in some way exceptional and to record the nature and frequency of their involvement with them. Similar data could also be collected during other practicum experiences. It may also be desirable to screen practicum sites and supervising teachers.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify competencies teachers felt were important when teaching the exceptional student, obtain recommendations about changes that should be made in the undergraduate program at colleges such as Minot State and to gather information about the present system for delivering services to the exceptional child. This report is in no way another efficacy study in which the relative merits of a mainstreamed vs. segregated approach are compared. Even though the Division of Education and Psychology at Minot State is committed to include in their undergraduate course a program concerned with mainstreaming mildly handicapped students, every attempt was made to remain neutral on this issue during interviews. The committment to mainstreaming did nevertheless help determine what questions were asked and to some extent how data were summarized during the study.

Although it may have been possible to categorize teacher comments by competency areas (assessment, management, observation, etc.) using a precedure similar to the one employed by Espeseth and Armstrong (1975), this approach was abandoned when it became apparent inservice teachers did not generally use this vocabulary in response to questions. This means that the first objective of this study has been fully met if the word competency is only defined in an informal sense as the teachers used it. One implication of this "finding" is the possibility that a massive inservice education program for regular classroom teachers is needed if it is indeed established that teachers require knowledge of "competencies" and "competency terminology" to adequately meet the needs to exceptional students in regular classes. Obviously, conclusive results from comprehensive studies, such as the one presently being conducted by Melvyn

Semmel at Indiana University are needed before any generalized statement can be made.

The second objective of this study centered on teacher recommendations to colleges. These have been summarized in the preceeding section and in tables throughout the report. Teacher statements in this area were clear, direct and strong. Colleges need to offer more (or better) practicum experiences and more course work concerning exceptional children. Teachers presently feel there is too much theory and too little practice. This is certainly a matter which goes beyond the exceptional child in the regular class and a continuing review of theoretical and practical experiences is needed.

The last objective was to obtain information about the system. It was found that even small North Dakota rural schools are complex systems. The days when there were just teachers and students are over. Now there may be L.D. teachers, special education classes in the same or neighboring school district, reading or basic skills teachers and a speech therapist. Many of these specialists are hired with grant funds and may be referred to informally as the "Title" teachers by school staff. Undoubtedly the fight to obtain the services of specialists has been long and arduous and several administrators indicated they were still unable to hire one specialist or another even though funds were available From teacher and administrator comments made during interviews, one may raise the question as to whether the real need is for more specialists or for more better trained regular teachers.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS
(QUESTIONNAIRE)

INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS
(QUESTIONNAIRE)

SCHOOL _____ DATE _____

1. Grade you teach? _____

2. How many years have you taught? _____

3. Was your school involved in the Upper Midwest Small Schools Project?

yes no

4. Were you involved in the UMSSP? If yes, what was your role?

yes no

5. If yes, how many diagnostic sessions did you attend and how many of your students were involved? How many workshops did you attend?

6. If your students attended the diagnostic clinics, how were they selected?

7. To your knowledge, were any students placed in different learning situations (classes) as the result of the diagnostic sessions?

yes no

If yes, describe:

8. Where are students with special handicaps or learning problems placed in your school district now?

9. Who makes this decision? What criteria are used?

10. Have you ever known or had a student that was placed in a special learning situation (class)?

ye[illegible] no

If yes, what was the nature of the problem? Describe:

11. Some schools in the nation are now integrating or "mainstreaming" mildly handicapped students into regular classes. Are you familiar with this procedure? If so, how do you feel about it?

12. Has this system been tried in your school?

yes no

13. Do you think this system would work in your school?

yes no

Comments:

QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS ONLY

14. Have you ever had a student in your classes with a physical disability (sight loss, hearing loss, loss of limbs, etc.)?

yes no

If yes, how many?

15. Have you ever had a student in your class that you believe was mildly retarded?

yes no

If yes, how many?

16. What problems did you encounter?

a.

b.

c.

d.

17. What special training or competencies, if any, do you feel new teachers need if they are to teach special students in regular classes?

18. What specific recommendations do you feel you have for changes in course content on the pre-service (undergraduate) level?

APPENDIX B

LETTER SENT TO ADMINISTRATORS AT UMSSP SCHOOLS

Dear _____:

I am currently assistant director of a HEW funded program concerned with making curricular changes in undergraduate education courses at Minot State. The objectives of our program are in some ways similar to those of the Upper Midwest Small Schools Project (UMSSP) that your school was involved with a year or so ago. Recently while Dr. Allen and I were visiting with Mr. Robert Muhs, superintendent at Towner, Mr. Muhs suggested that your school might be willing to participate in our study by letting me visit briefly with some of your teachers about their involvement in the UMSSP diagnostic program. The purpose of my visit would be to ask the teachers about their perceptions and concerns relating to children who deviate from the norm in the classroom. We would like any curricular changes we make on the college level to reflect actual and perceived teacher needs.

If you are willing to participate, I would need to visit with two or three of your teachers for approximately twenty minutes each. I will be using an interview technique and will discuss the questions with you before I begin. I will be calling you in the next few days to talk with you further about the program and to ask your permission to visit your school.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Clark Markell
Assistant Director

CM/sr

APPENDIX C

LETTER SENT TO ADMINISTRATORS AFTER INTERVIEWS WERE COMPLETED

Dear _____:

Thank you very much for taking time to organize my recent visit with your teachers concerning the Upper Midwest Small Schools Project (UMSSP). Their comments will be very important as we plan revisions in our undergraduate program locally.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Clark Markell
Assistant Director

CM/sr

APPENDIX D

TEACHER STATEMENTS WHEN ASKED "DO YOU FEEL THIS SYSTEM [MAINSTREAMING] WOULD WORK AT YOUR SCHOOL?(ITEM 13)

ITEM 13

"DO YOU FEEL THIS SYSTEM WOULD WORK IN YOUR SCHOOL?"

"I have always felt that with qualified and professional people, all things can work for the good of the people involved."

"Title I is working in grades 1-3 this year."

"L.D. students are mainstreamed now. One EMR student is now in regular classes. I feel the student needs vocational training."

"We have it now and have had no problems."

"It does work."

"We have it."

"It works to a certain extent. Not able to give as much attention."

"I think it works most of the time. On the whole, it seems to work."

"I individualize worksheets, etc. Special students were good at finding the answer. They got along fine on the playground."

"It does work."

"It does now. Personnel should be trained to help the teacher."

"It works fine. The students have trouble but also show improvements."

"Not if they get D's and F's, it isn't good. A degree of success is needed."

"It works."

"It is limited to a degree now."

"To a certain extent."

"I don't have an aid."

"It does, but there is still problems."

"It works fine. We have well qualified and capable support people."

"I think a full-time staff member and a special room would be better."

"It doesn't do any harm. It works fine if there is support."

"I think it does."

"In my situation it is making it alright. It would not work well without support personnel."

"You really work on it. We have several that should be tested. I know of two students that should be in special education."

"I think it is excellent."

"Right now, yes."

"We do it as much as we can."

"It works up to a point."

"I think it works."

"The system has worked."

"It is working."

APPENDIX E

TEACHER RESPONSES WHEN ASKED "WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED WITH A MILDLY RETARDED STUDENT IN YOUR REGULAR CLASS?"

ITEM 16.

"WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED WITH A MILDLY RETARDED STUDENT IN YOUR REGULAR CLASS?"

Teacher #1

a) learning difficulties - being accepted by peers
b) The student had trouble accepting responsibilities in our classroom situation.

Teacher #2

"The special student took too much time from the regular classes. I was unable to locate appropriate materials."

Teacher #3

"Special students in regular classes are O.K. if manipulative materials are available in such areas as math and science. Sterns structural arithematic is good and so are ESS science materials."

Teacher #4

"I have encountered the following problems:

a) student couldn't read and had a short attention span.
b) student created discipline problems when he tried to get attention.
c) student was not interested.

Teacher #5

"I had difficulties locating help and identifying procedures to use with the exceptional child. Teachers need instructional packages or someone to help individualize materials. Special students are now tested too much."

Teacher #6

"The student was 2-3 years older than the other students and more developed physically than others. This created problems."

Teacher #7

"It was difficult to find materials that were on the childs' level. The student would get up and walk around the room and therefore created some behavior problems."

Teacher #8

"The student tried hard but simply couldn't learn. I had to make exceptions frequently."

Teacher #9

"Some students were "hyper", while others had sight or speech problems. Some special students were mildly retarded."

Teacher #10

"There was no real problem. Special students got a bit frustrated at times, but were very cooperative."

Teacher #11

"It works o.k. in first grade. If they stay with their peers they will be fine socially."

Teacher #12

"Some special students require special assignments."

Teacher #13

"If it is a speech problem it can lead to communication difficulties between teacher and student."

Teacher #14

"It is easier for teachers to handle students with a sight problem than those that have a hearing loss."

Teacher #15

"A wide variety."

Teacher #16

"The question is whether or not they get the attention they need. Other students expect an equal amount of time and help. It is difficult for both student and teacher."

Teacher #17

"The exceptional student I have is very loud and disrupts the whole class some days. Someone told him that he doesn't have to do it (the work) because it is too hard - this causes problems. He is kind of bossy to others, also.

Teacher #18

"Discipline - because I don't have the time to help them constantly. They get bored. I don't have the right materials. Understanding them - they don't talk too clearly."

Teacher #19

"I felt a need for different special materials for these students."

Teacher #20

"They were very slow learners, they didn't even know when to take out their books. They couldn't even read the word "the." They did make progress with basic skills. Their behavior was more "hyper" than others. Malnutrition may have been a factor with one student. One swore a lot, but wasn't aware he was doing wrong."

Teacher #21

"I generally felt a need for more special help. The special student was older than other students."

Teacher #22

"The student was easily distracted and very poor in math. He was better in reading. His motor skills are not as developed as much as others. Socially there were no special problems. Other students like him and he plays together without any problems."

Teacher #23

"The student could learn but had difficulties learning from books. He was very mechanically inclined. There were no social problems."

Teacher #24

"The student had learning problems along with behavioral problems."

Teacher #25

"The student couldn't read when she came to me, but I got the other students to help her. It was good. The whole class became involved with the project."

Teacher #26

"The student was behind academically and had problems relating with the other students socially."

Teacher #27

"Very bossy. She tells others what to do.
laughs a lot.
very "hyper"
very slow learner

Teacher #28

"After awhile there were some discipline problems."

Teacher # 29

"Individual attention is required and sometimes it can become a discipline problem when reading level is too high."

Teacher #30

"The student was unable to read the materials as well as others and was afraid to respond. I had to make sure the other students didn't make fun. The other children learned to accept "slower" children."

Teacher #31

"There is not enough time to individualize materials."

APPENDIX F

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM TEACHERS WITH FIVE YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE OR LESS

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM TEACHERS WITH 5 YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE OR LESS.

Teacher #1

"I recommend that every regular teacher take at least one course in special education such as introduction to speech pathology. They should also take more remedial reading. Some teachers do not seem to be aware that every student reads on a different level. Teachers need help with individualization. They need to understand the concept of individualization. More work in the classroom! More work with student control! Actually teaching math, reading, etc. I don't forsee any particular problem with parental pressure concerning a program with individualization for the student."

Teacher #2

"There should be more contact with students that have learning difficulties before graduation. Films should be used to help pick out students that are having learning difficulties."

Teacher #3

"Students may need a 5th year or summer work. It is difficult to take anything out or make changes because all that is there now is important."

Teacher #4

"Practical experience is necessary. I have had a course in remedial reading, learning disabilities and exceptional children. We did testing and saw films. We also worked with the Peabody practical readability test. The L.D. and other special education courses were interesting but have not helped me very much."

Teacher #5

"More work with special students in the classroom is needed. Learning how to plan for them. 1 or 2 special education classes would be helpful. Education courses are too irrelevant now."

Teacher #6

"More time should be spent on discipline and less on such things as the open classroom. If open classroom techniques are going to work the school system must cooperate. If you are going to individualize something such as reading, a lot of money may be needed to buy materials. I recommend that more courses be offered in psychology and on the handicapped. If it weren't for the psychology course I took, I wouldn't be as aware of the problems. The exceptional child should be stressed more!"

Teacher #7

"Work in actual classroom setting was very important. Especially with individualized instruction. Students need to have some background in the culture of the local area. I had a culture orientation course at the University of Utah which was very helpful. A short workshop on malnutrition and childrens diseases would also be good. Last year I had students with scabes and ringworm. The other teachers helped me identify these problems."

Teacher #8

"I never was taught very much about what to do with the faster and slower students. I do not know how to handle the smarter students and I have an exceptionally good student now. He now reads on his own. He also is very interested in science. I never liked science. If I gave this 4th grade student 5th grade science materials now, will he have to repeat them in the 5th grade? He is very shy. Working on a contract system would be helpful."

"Student teaching should be longer. A whole year would be better. More responsibility for the class should be given during student teaching. Discipline is important."

"I think a 2 credit course in bulletin boards should be offered. I would have liked to have had a whole notebook full of bulletin board ideas when I started teaching. You generally have more time as a student than as a teacher."

Teacher #9

"There should be more direct contact with students - not just correcting papers. Attendence forms and requisition forms should be given more attention. More attention should be given to learning how to schedule activities. You should require more classes concerning behavior modification (how to handle classroom crisis)."

Teacher #10

"I would recommend that more psychology be required. Discipline - how to set up a classroom day. More should be done with this. Math - it is important how and when to review. It is difficult to know how much review is necessary. It would be helpful to learn about how much stress should be on vocabulary, maps, charts, graphs, etc, in a subject such as social studies. Stress subjects more and methods less."

Teacher #11

"More should be done on how to handle deaf children. Teachers need to be taught how to handle learning problems. The general reading course is not adequate. Methods courses are of little value. Introduction to L.D. would be helpful. These teachers

seemed to know things to look for. I took courses at Moorehead and Minot concerning education of the handicapped. This gives you an idea of how to pick handicapped kids out. I support individualization. At Belcourt math is individualized. They use a program that was centered in Pittsburg. (IPI math) It worked."

Teacher #12

"There should be required courses about exceptional children. A clinical situation where the undergraduate works with an elementary student who had a problem would be helpful. Present methods classes don't teach you how to get across the subject matter to the special student, i.e. math, etc. More student teaching should be required. I think there should be two quarters of student teaching. It would also be helpful to student teach in all the grades. More practical things - school records, bulletin boards, etc. should be emphasized."

Teacher #13

"A course that would help me learn how to design and diagnose problems would have been good. There should be more experience with elementary students before graduation. Topics covered should range from speech problems to general problems."

Teacher #14

"We should have had more training for gifted students. There should be more experience in the classroom with both slow and gifted students. I use individualization. I don't see any special experiences, that are necessary to teach that way. You learn to design a course of work for the individual student."

Teacher #15

"I want to see individualization explained adequately. Regular teachers need to see it in a model classroom and they need practice. Strong emphasis should be placed on learning theory, i.e., Behaviorist vs. Humanist (Gregon). Curriculum - teachers do not have training in what constitutes an adequate curriculum and have had no training in evaluation materials. The present practicum program is good but it should be more structured. Regular teachers should take:

1. Introduction to speech pathology (emphasis on language)
2. Introduction to L.D.
3. Introduction to EMR

Any type of remedial reading techniques would be helpful. People need a fifth year."

APPENDIX G

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM TEACHERS WITH MORE THAN FIVE YEARS TEACHING EXPERIENCE

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM TEACHERS WITH MORE THAN FIVE YEARS TEACHING EXPERIENCE.

Teacher #1

"Pre-service teachers need practical experience with special students. More reading is needed in content areas. Dr. Stolt's reading course was excellent for me and Mrs. Oakland's course was good. She is an excellent resource person for reading problems."

"Our reading program is leveled, but not individualized. Our school program is now individualized, one day a week SRA Labs are used. Our school did have individualized math but now they use basic skills texts. Our individualized program was dropped because of parental opposition and the fact that some teachers felt the individualized program was an excess amount of work."

Teacher #2

"I would recommend learning disabilities courses and courses such as "Reading for the Exceptional Child." Practicum experience is needed before actual student teaching. It would be good for pre-service teachers to work with students with various learning and emotional problems. Courses should help students understand how to sequence activities not just prescribe them. Regular teachers and special teachers need to coordinate activities."

Teacher #3

"Undergraduates should be sent out as juniors and not wait until they are seniors and they begin student teacher experience. Possibly a course that would last six weeks in the field would be good for more practical experience. A class concerning exceptional children would be helpful."

Teacher #4

"Self awareness training would be most helpful. There are many personalities in a classroom. There should be more Psychology - child psychology was particularily helpful to me."

Teacher #5

"I recommend more practical work with students with handicaps and more training in how to identify learning disabilities."

Teacher #6

"There should be more actual classroom experience. Methods don't just help that much. Reading courses should be stressed from

the start. If L.D. people are involved, it should start in the early elementary grade."

Teacher #7

"I feel the teacher needs aids. If the individualization is to work properly, the teacher needs help. Possible work in learning disabilities, but it should be in all areas not just reading. Sometimes there are discipline problems."

Teacher #8

"Actual teaching is the most important thing. Student teacher should be in some methods classes."

Teacher #9

"More classroom work. Methods shoud come after some contact in the classroom. I learned more in my student teaching than in my methods classes. Reading is leveled now in our school but we really don't have individualization."

Teacher #10

"I recommend:

a) an early student teacher experience that comes before methods classes.

b) more contact than just the September experience.

c) more student teaching.

d) some work in special education.

Teacher #11

"I recommend that:

a) there should be more experience with children earlier in the undergraduate program.

b) students should take some course that prepares them for special education.

c) students should take classes on how to teach the exceptionally good students - the fast learner (gifted student)."

Teacher #12

"There should be a chance to work with special education teacher. They need to be made aware of the difficulties that they may encounter. We know what is wrong, but don't know how to proceed."

Teacher #13

"Methods classes did very little for me. I learned more when I had to work with students. You need to get to know students. More experiences before student teaching, even observing helps."

Teacher #14

"Courses on teaching the exceptional child would be appropriate. A.V. courses for teachers about the handicapped would be good. Yes, I do some individualizing. I find it difficult to throw all formal instruction out, however."

Teacher #15

"More courses in special education should be required. Discipline is important and more practical ideas should be included."

Teacher #16

"Every teacher with a primary certificate should have at least one course in speech therapy. Not to replace the special teacher but to enable the regular teacher to be more effective - help with the carryover."

"Expose more students to classroom situations during sophomore years. Do not wait with contact until their senior year. Teachers tend to teach textbooks not students. I feel we should individualize but to be practical - there needs to be a low student-faculty ratio."

"There is some friction between the elementary and high school. I think it would be a good idea if high school teachers were to teach elementary for a few days and the elementary teachers took over for the high school teachers."

Teacher #17

"There should be more methods courses to help teachers better prepare themselves to teach special students. Students should be doing more observing. Student teaching was good, but it would have been more helpful if I could have done more observing and less preparation during the experience."

Teacher #18

"Undergraduates should have more special training in how to handle special children - they are not all the same. They should also have a class where various types of equipment, learning guides, etc., are discussed."

"Schools have got to change, too. Some students need individual study help. They (special students) don't miss being in the regular classroom. Some students enjoy going out (of the class)."

Teacher #19

"Discipline problems. You simply can't let the students do their own thing, as in the new school."

Teacher #20

"I would recommend more experience watching someone working with a handicapped student in a classroom situation."

"Student teaching should include experiences with exceptionally gifted students."

"More classes that deal with the exceptional child would be helpful."

"Individualization - A one to one relationship is needed. Individualization is o.k., but where do you stop? Start? I don't see how you can do it in high school or college."

Teacher #21

"Too many classes are Utopian. Off campus experiences were the most valuable. A good cooperating teacher is important. Special learning problems are now given more attention in the whole system."

Teacher #22

"If students were sent out earlier in the educational career, courses would mean more. Student teaching was most valuable to me. There should be more courses about exceptional children."

Teacher #23

"There should be more actual experience in the field and less theory. Remedial reading courses would be helpful. Teaching in rural school was more helpful to me than the campus school experience. A L.D. teacher to work with certain cases would be helpful to the regular teacher."

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